

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION	TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE MANUAL	
FAMILY INDEPENDENCE PLAN - 205	COMAR 07.03.03.04	APPLICATION-200

The Family Independence Plan (FIP) is the most important step in helping customers achieve self-sufficiency. The FIP plan tells the case manager and the customer where the customer is going and how the customer is going to get there. Leaving any portion of the FIP plan incomplete will likely hinder and delay the customer's success. The FIP plan is developed by the case manager and the customer together and after completion of the Assessment.

205.1 Definitions

- A. **Good faith effort** means the customer has made every effort to meet the terms outlined for the customer in the Family Independence Plan (FIP).
- B. **Supportive services** are services provided to the TCA family based on the assessed needs of the customer by the local department or through referrals to service providers (such as: counseling, the Social Services Administration, vocational rehabilitation referral, education, training and other evaluations).
- C. **Work eligible individuals** (WEI) are the individuals applying for or receiving TCA benefits that are required to be counted in the federal work participation rate.
 1. Long term disabled customers are now counted in the federal work participation rate and should be offered supportive services to enable them to become self sufficient.
 2. While long term disabled adults remain exempt from work requirements under state law and COMAR, they have the right to participate voluntarily in TCA work activities.

205.2 The Family Independence Plan

- A. The customer and case manager complete the FIP together. The completed FIP must be signed by the case manager and all adults on the TCA case.
- B. The FIP contains:
 1. A statement of the customer's/family's goals and the intent of the Plan
 - Many customers don't know how to set goals and don't believe they can reach any goal they set.

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- One of the **goals** of the FIP is to help customers develop and strive for attainable goals.
2. Activities and other actions the customer/family is expected to participate in or complete such as:
 - a. Work activities:
 - Job search;
 - Employment or training; and
 - Community service.
 - b. Child Support:
 - Filing for child support, and
 - Keeping all appointments for the child support process
 - c. Substance abuse treatment.
 - d. Filing for all benefits the family may be potentially eligible to receive.
 3. The supportive services the local department is expected to provide to the family such as:
 - Child Care Scholarship;
 - Transportation allowance;
 - Counseling;
 - Reasonable accommodations; and
 - Expungement and bonding assistance.

205.3 Reviewing and Updating the FIP

- A. Update the FIP at redetermination, interim change and when other actions occur.
- B. Review and update the FIP when the customer/household reaches 42-48 months of TCA. (See Section 0313 of the TCA Manual.)
- C. Review and update the FIP when the customer/household reaches 59-60 months of TCA. (See Section 0313 of the TCA Manual.)
- D. If a hardship exemption has been granted, the FIP must be reviewed and updated every six months at a minimum after the exemption was granted. (See Section 0313 of the TCA Manual.)

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E. The case manager may schedule interim appointments between recertifications that include a review of the FIP and amendments to the FIP as needed.

F. An updated FIP must include the status of:

- All past and updated assessments;
- Information regarding customer disabilities and accommodations;
- Information on limited English proficiency, if applicable;
- Information on counseling referrals, acceptance, or refusal;
- Social Services referrals and support offered, accepted or refused;
- Other supportive services offered, accepted or refused;
- Testing;
- Education programs referred, accepted or refused;
- Job search history;
- Job training history;
- Work experience;
- Employment;
- History of family violence; and
- History of substance abuse.

205.3 Compliance with the FIP

A. Customers develop the FIP with the case manager and agree to follow it.

B. Non-compliance with the FIP includes:

- Failure to provide required verification;
- Refusal to sign required forms;
- Not following the steps of the FIP; and
- Missing scheduled appointments.

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205.4 Penalty for Non-Compliance with the FIP

- A. If a customer is non-compliant with the FIP, the TCA case should be closed accordingly. Send a Notice of Adverse Action (NOAA) and close the TCA case after the 10 day adverse action period.
- B. If the customer had an active hardship exemption due to reaching 60 months of TCA benefits, the hardship exemption ends once the customer is non-compliant with the FIP.

Examples

- Example 1. Carol Carroll applies for herself and her sons, Dan, 1 month old, and David, 2 years old. The father of her children left the home a week after Dan was born. Ms. Carroll took a secretarial course in high school, but has no work experience. Ms. Carroll wants to go to work as soon as possible, but thinks she should stay home until Dan is at least 6 months old. Ms. Carroll's FIP agreement acknowledges that she has a child under 1 exemption for 11 months but wants to participate sooner. The FIP also acknowledges that Ms. Carroll will be required to participate for only 20 hours per week, although she may participate more. It states that she will:
- File for child support for both children now;
 - Attend appointments with the child support staff and attend any child support hearings ;
 - In the month that Dan turns 6 months old,
 - Call the child care resource line for child care facilities in her area;
 - Check out child care providers in her area; and
 - Locate child care for both children.
 - Practice on her mother's computer every week; and
 - Attend interim appointments, if scheduled by the case manager, to review compliance with the agreement.
- Example 2. Ms. Carroll comes to see the case manager when Dan is 6 months old. She indicates she wants to get a job as soon as possible. A child support order was established for both boys and their father is paying support. She has 5 months left on her exemption. Her FIP is updated as follows:
- Ms. Carroll will:
 - Select a day care provider;
 - Attend the local department's job search class;

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- Attend a computer class;
- Look for an office job; and
- Accept a job that is compatible with available child care and transportation.
- The local department will assist her in:
 - Applying for the Child Care Scholarship;
 - Obtaining Transportation allowance during training; and
 - Referring her to any other services as needed.